



## CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

# NEWS RELEASE

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### Operation Welcome Home Chief Meets with Returning Soldiers

**FAIRFIELD, Calif.**— Operation Welcome Home Deputy Secretary Dan Nelan joined Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to welcome home nearly 100 soldiers with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 49th Military Police Brigade of the California National Guard, as they returned to California at Travis Air Force Base following their one-year deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Today we are welcoming home a group of California's bravest men and women who have risked their lives to protect ours. I visited these soldiers in Iraq last November to thank them for their hard work, and I saw the hardships and dangers they faced every day while defending our freedoms," said Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. "Our dedicated servicemen and women, like these returning home today, are the reason I launched Operation Welcome Home, bringing together all of the available resources to help them transition successfully from the battlefield to the home front."

The Governor initiated the work on Operation Welcome Home in his State of the State Address and formally kicked off the program six months later on board the USS Midway Museum in San Diego. Since the program began contact information on more than 17,000 veterans and active duty personnel returning to California has been collected by the state. This information is being used to reach out to the veterans and returning service men and women to ensure that they are connected to the services and benefits they need to transition from the battle front to the home front.

"Operation Welcome Home is unique in that it is a proactive program that reaches out to the veterans to make sure they know about the benefits and services they have earned as opposed to a passive process that waits for the veterans to seek out the service," said Dan Nelan, Deputy Secretary for Operation Welcome Home at the California Department of Veterans Affairs.

The mission of California's Operation Welcome Home is to directly connect with the 30,000 veterans annually returning to California so they can access the benefits they have earned and the services that can help them transition successfully from military service to their civilian life. Governor Schwarzenegger has targeted \$20 million to hire 306 people to directly reach out and connect with these veterans. This operation, one of the most comprehensive collaboration of services in the nation, will break down government silos and allow veterans straightforward and easy access to benefits and services including: **Employment and Job Training Assistance; Unemployment Benefits; Education Opportunities; Housing Assistance; Health Care Needs; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs benefits; and Support for Families.**

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